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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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TO : The Secretary
THROUGH : S/S
FROM : DIR - Roger Hilson

Rog Hilson

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INTELLIGENCE NOTE: SOVIETS SOFT-PEDAL DIRECT US-SOVIET CONFRONTATION.

US Vs Cuba. Soviet UN delegate Zorin's speech to the Security Council yesterday reaffirmed the emphasis in the earlier Soviet Government statement that the issue in the current crisis was in the first instance between the US and Cuba. He took a somewhat stronger line in denying the existence of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba but otherwise maintained the evident Soviet effort to avoid posing the issue as one of direct Soviet-US confrontation.

Line of This Approach: (1) Moscow hopes by this approach to garner more sympathy at the UN and in world opinion for its demands that the US reverse its quarantine of Cuba.

(2) This approach pretends all military equipment shipped by the USSR belongs to "little" Cuba and therefore could not represent a threat to the "big" United States, however, in taking this line, Moscow makes it more difficult for itself to entertain subsequent proposals from any source that the US and the USSR would trade off foreign bases;

(3) This approach is designed to dampen down any war scare among the Soviet people. Meetings within the Soviet Union have stressed the "hands off Cuba" line and the need for defensive measures in support of Cuba. Khrushchev's ostentatious attention to American singer Jerome Hines in Moscow presumably also is meant to reduce the atmosphere of tension over the Cuban issue.

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Future Action. While Moscow has privately threatened resistance to US efforts to stop Soviet ships, its public line seems designed to leave it with some option to back off if it chooses. Clearly the fiction of a purely US-Cuban crisis will be hard to maintain once there is a US-Soviet incident at sea. On balance, we think it probable the Soviets will risk such an incident in the expectation that the resultant further rise in tension will stimulate pressures on the US to end the quarantine and give rise to various kinds of compromise proposals. This will gain time for the Soviets to determine (1) whether the US has made a plausible case on the issue of the missiles, (2) whether the Soviet line that any Communist weapon is defensive can be sustained, (3) whether a bargain is available whereby the missiles can be withdrawn gracefully, or (4) whether to risk escalation in countermeasures to the US quarantine measures.

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